Legends Of The Dark Knight: Pilot Episode; The Last Laugh

By

Michael K. Snyder

"The Killing Joke" by Alan Moore and Brian Bolland
Characters created by Bob Kane
Countless Issues of Batman and Shadow of The Bat
Open on a blank screen. Slowly, words begin to fade out of the darkness...

Man is a substance clad in shadows.
- John Sterling

As the words fade to black, the opening titles blast onto the screen as well as the score.

EXT. GOTHAM CITY FAIRGROUNDS—MORNING

A construction crew begins assembling a large ferris wheel alongside a funhouse.

EXT. ROOFTOPS—NIGHT

JIM GORDON stands by the edge of a rooftop. He looks out into the sky. Batman creeps out of the shadows from behind him.

    BATMAN
    You wanted to see me.

Jim jumps as he is startled by Batman’s sudden appearance. He turns and faces Batman.

    JIM GORDON
    We got a real problem. During the big breakout over at Arkham, the cities most ruthless killers, maniacs, rapists, sadists and everyday assholes were let out onto the streets of Gotham. All but four are accounted for.

    BATMAN
    Four?

    JIM GORDON
    Three of them are no problem, their so damn crazy they have a hard time remembering their names.

    BATMAN
    The fourth.

    JIM GORDON
    His name is Victor Zsasz. He was convicted for the slaying of sixteen young women. He has a (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
JIM GORDON (cont’d)
bizarre knife fetish, and his
trademark is slicing a tally into
his skin after each of his kills.
At each crime scene we found his
victims in strange poses. One of
the women was sitting up in her
sofa with a glass of water glued to
her hand. Her eyelids were slit
open and the tv was turned on. She
was watching "It’s A Wonderful
Life".

BATMAN
Heartless.

JIM GORDON
I’d say so. Anyways, we’ve had six
dead children in the past two
weeks. Each placed in strange poses
that resemble the trademark of
Mr.Zsasz.

BATMAN
Do you know where he may be?

JIM GORDON
No clue. The autopsy reports show
signs of rape and molestation.

Jim turns and steps closer to the edge, rubbing his chin.

JIM GORDON
These assholes just keep getting
sicker and sicker.

As he turns, Batman is gone. He smiles.

JIM GORDON
Good with words.

EXT.GOTHAM ALLEY-NIGHT
Fog fills a dark and narrow alley. The light of the moon
peers inside the darkness. DODGE (44) steps down the alley,
smoking a large cigar. A shadow flies overhead. Dodge stops
and looks up. He pulls a pistol out of his pants.

Glass breaks in the near distance.
DODGE
Who’s there?

A cat screams and runs past Dodge. He nearly shoots it, but regains his cool.

DODGE
A fucking cat.

He laughs and continues walking down the alley. The cat sits at the end of the alley, purring. As Dodge reaches it he bends over and pets it.

DODGE
You should be more careful, I almost shot you.

As he bends down, Batman rises through the fog at the far end of the alley. He steps towards Dodge.

DODGE
Your a nice cat. Most the pussy I’ve known ain’t quite as nice as you.

He laughs.

The cat hisses as Batman reaches Dodge.

DODGE
Hey, chill out!

The cat runs off, scared. Dodge stands and shrugs his shoulders. Batman places his arm under Dodge’s neck, choking him.

BATMAN
Drop the gun.

Dodge drops the gun. Batman loosens his grip. He throws Dodge up against the alley wall.

BATMAN
Zsasz.

DODGE
What the fuck man? I got no clue what your talking about!

BATMAN
Don’t play games with me. Where is Zsasz?
DODGE
Listen, I got no clue who your talking about.

Batman grabs Dodge’s throat tightly.

BATMAN
You ever been to Arkham?

DODGE
I’m not going back!

BATMAN
Where is Victor Zsasz?

DODGE
The East End.

Batman loosens his grip. He punches Dodge in the face, knocking him unconscious. As fog fills the alley, Batman creeps off into the darkness.

EXT. THE EAST END—NIGHT

VICTOR ZSASZ(34) walks slowly past a group of homeless men. The streets of The East End are dark, dirty, and full of fog. Victor wears a large black hoodie, with the hood up over his head. As he steps past the homeless, they get silent.

He walks over to JACOB(23) who stands leaning up against a run down apartment building.

VICTOR
Hello Jacob.

JACOB
Victor, I wasn’t expecting you.

VICTOR
I’m using a different alias now.

JACOB
Cops hot on your trail?

VICTOR
You can never be to careful. Any new, material?

Jacob pulls a picture of LINDSY(9) out of his coat pocket and hands it to Victor.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JACOB
Her name is Lindsy. I wrote her
address on the back of the picture.

VICTOR
She’s a cute one. I’ll enjoy doing
her in.

JACOB
That’ll be two grand, Zsasz.

VICTOR
You’ll get your money.

JACOB
Hey man, this is bullshit, you were
supposed to have my damn money
tonight.

VICTOR
Growing feisty, Jacob?

Victor grins a dark and sinister grin.

JACOB
Look man, you got till next Friday.
I don’t have my money by then, and
I’ll have to come down on you.

VICTOR
Deal.

Victor reaches out his hand. Jacob grabs his hand and shakes it.

JACOB
I got a question for you.

VICTOR
Ask away.

JACOB
How do you do it?

VICTOR
Do what?

JACOB
How do you kill these children?

VICTOR
I find irony funny, Jacob.
CONTINUED:

JACOB
Ironic?

VICTOR
Do you feel that you are any better than me? I may actually commit the act, but without people like YOU I would have nothing more than a few mere hunches.

JACOB
I don’t kill kids.

VICTOR
What do you call this?

He holds up the photo, and begins to chuckle.

VICTOR
Have a nice night, Jacob.

Victor creeps slowly away. A lone lamp light shines into his back and casts a long and sinister shadow over the sidewalk.

INT.WAYNE MANOR—MORNING

BRUCE WAYNE(20s) and ALFRED(60s/70s) sit in the dining room of Wayne Manor watching the news on a large flat screen TV.

TV
Another child has been found bound and dead in the middle of a street in the East End. Her name was Lindsey Dent, cousin of Harvey Dent. Mr. Dent is in the lead of the race for Gotham District Attorney. Authorities say that this death is most likely connected to the others in recent months.

Bruce turns the TV off.

ALFRED
Any ideas, master Bruce?

BRUCE
Victor Zsasz.

ALFRED
Doesn’t ring a bell.

(CONTINUED)
BRUCE
He escaped Arkham during the breakout. He takes pride in everything he does. Keeps a tally on every child he kills.

ALFRED
And yet he still walks unharmed?

BRUCE
I’m working on it, the guy’s a damn ghost.

ALFRED
And you are a shadow.

BRUCE
Have you spoken to Fox?

ALFRED
He called. Says he has some new adventure equipment you may be interested in.

BRUCE
That’s all?

ALFRED
Oh and that your company is running rather smoothly.

BRUCE
Good, good. How do you feel about this Harvey Dent?

Alfred picks up a newspaper article off a table and tosses it to Bruce.

ALFRED
I think he may be alright.

Bruce unfolds the article, it reads: DENT SAYS "BATMAN IS WHAT WE NEED".

EXT. GOTHAM WATER PLANT— NIGHT

MALCOLM (32) unlocks the large double door entrance to the plant followed by two goons (23 and 45).

(VO) MALCOLM
Unlock the door. This will only take seconds...in and out. Like we
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
(VO) MALCOLM (cont’d)
weren’t even here. Get the money, get out.

The doors swing open. GOON 1 pulls a large RED HOOD out of his jacket pocket and hands it to Malcolm.

GOON 1
Put this on.

MALCOLM
What for?

GOON 2
For your wife.

INT. MALCOLM’S HOUSE—DAY—FLASHBACK
Malcolm stands next to his wife MARY(25) who is pregnant.

MALCOLM
Don’t worry, babe, I’ll make this work.

She kisses him and leaves the room. He lifts a large envelope off the table and pulls out a large paper that reads: "WE ARE SORRY TO INFORM YOU THAT THE CITY OF GOTHAM CAN NO LONGER KEEP YOU AS AN EMPLOYEE. YOUR FINAL PAY CHECK IS LOCATED IN THIS ENVELOPE."

He crumples the paper and throws it across the room.

INT. GOTHAM WATER PLANT—NIGHT
Malcolm, enters, wearing the RED HOOD. The two goons run past him.

GOON 1
Which way?

Malcolm points to a large door down a hallway. As the doors shut close behind them, they venture down the hall. Malcolm opens the door and follows the goons into a stairwell.

A single security GUARD(23) stops dead in his tracks as he meets them at the bottom of the stairwell.

GUARD
Hey, you can’t be in here!

Quickly, goon 2 pulls a pistol out of his pocket and fires at the security guard, killing him.

(CONTINUED)
Malcolm turns and runs to the front door, flinging it open. As the two goons charge after him two more security guards charge down the stairwell, armed with pistols. Malcolm exits the building unmasking himself.

The two goons begin to fire at the security guards, each shot missing.

Malcolm runs to a parked car. He fumbles around in his pockets pulling out his car keys. He opens the driver door, hops inside and speeds away.

EXT. MALCOLM’S HOUSE—NIGHT

Police cars surround Malcolm’s lawn. Slowly Malcolm pulls his car into his driveway. A paramedic speeds up to his house. A POLICE OFFICER(46) walks up to Malcolm’s window, Malcolm rolls it down.

POLICE OFFICER
Malcolm?

MALCOLM
Is there some kind of problem?

POLICE OFFICER
I’m afraid there has been an accident. Your wife...is dead.

Silent tears begin to roll down Malcolm’s cheeks.

POLICE OFFICER
I’m very sorry. It was an accidental death.

MALCOLM
My son?

POLICE OFFICER
I’m sorry, we couldn’t save him.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM—NIGHT

Malcolm slams his fist against the glass mirror, cracking it. The crack runs down the center of his face. He stairs into his reflection.
EXT. GOTHAM BEACH—NIGHT

Malcolm, his knuckles bloody, stumbles down the sandy beach. As the water crashes into the shore, he swigs from a brown bagged bottle of rum in his left hand.

He falls to his knees. As his knees hit the sand, he smashes the bottle against his face, breaking it. He begins to laugh hysterically.

Blood pours down his face as he grins. He crawls into the water and floats out to sea, laughing. Malcolm is dead...enter The Joker.

EXT. BAT SIGNAL ROOFTOP—DAY

Jim Gordon and Batman stand overlooking Gotham.

BATMAN
Zsasz is harder to find than I expected.

JIM GORDON
The Department can’t find anything either. No prints, no blood, nothing. It’s like he isn’t even there.

BATMAN
I’ll keep working on it.

Jim looks down to his watch.

JIM GORDON
Shit. I have to go, Dent’s speaking in the park today.

BATMAN
Are you a friend of his?

JIM GORDON
I’m on his campaign.

Batman reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small note.

BATMAN
Give him this.

Jim takes the note and places it into his pocket.

(CONTINUED)
JIM GORDON
That reminds me. Before I leave. I had the boy’s write you up a list of Zsasz’s known allies.

He hands Batman a piece of paper.

JIM GORDON
I circled the ones I thought would be the most help. Ya’ know, Dent thinks pretty highly of you. Maybe you should hand him this note yourself. Be good publicity.

BATMAN
I can’t afford publicity.

JIM GORDON
I almost forgot. "The Dark Knight"."The Shadow-Man"."The Batman".

He smiles. Batman does not.

BATMAN
You know how to reach me.

Batman leaps off the rooftop and glides into the fog. Jim smiles.

JIM GORDON
Yeah I guess I do.

He taps on the bat signal.

EXT.THE PARK-DAY

A huge crowd surrounds a large stage in the center of the park. Banners reading "HARVEY DENT.A NEW GOTHAM" are strung all over the park. Jim Gordon stands on the stage along with a few cops. HARVEY DENT(32) walks to a podium as the crowd cheers.

HARVEY DENT
Citizens of Gotham. I would like to thank you all for coming out here today. Without you there would be no me.

The crowd cheers.
HARVEY DENT
Thank you, thank you. Now, first and foremost I would like to address a note that I just received. As you all know, the criminals of Gotham have recently been taken aback by a masked vigilante who goes by The Batman. To some of you he is no more hero than he is menace.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out the small note.

HARVEY DENT
My friend’s, he has given me hope that he is as good as he seems. I stand by him. As your DISTRICT ATTORNEY I promise to keep the streets of Gotham safe and crime free. I believe that along with the help of The Batman, Jim Gordon and the entire Gotham City Police Force will crush all opposition to the law, once and for all!

The crowd cheers. A group of cops bring forward a covered painting on an easel.

HARVEY DENT
Now, I would like to take a few moments to unveil our new campaign poster. Jim, you do the honors.

Jim pulls the veil off the poster. Silence fills the crowd. Harvey Dent’s picture on the poster is covered in paint. His hair is painted green and his mouth made into a large sinister smile. The word FUCK is painted in black above his name. Below his name is a red J.

The crowd begins to gossip.

INT.JACOB’S APARTMENT-NIGHT
Moon light illuminates two rats crawling across the dusty carpet floors. Jacob sits on an old scratched up couch, drinking a bottle of Jack. The TV blares blurred images onto his face. He smiles as the woman on the TV moans.

Quickly, a shadow blocks the window. It silently moves by. Jacob pays no attention to the window.
He places his drink on the floor next to the couch and lowers his hands into his pants. As the woman on the screen’s screams grow louder he begins to close his eyes and listen.

A shadow moves past his face, briefly. He reopens his eyes and watches the screen again.

BATMAN (O.S.)
Kiddie porn?

Jacob jumps inches into the air, and turns looking for Batman. He is nowhere to be seen. Jacob reaches down for his drink, it is missing.

BATMAN (O.S.)
The bottle can’t save you.

JACOB
Who—who’s there? W—what do ya’ want?

BATMAN (O.S.)
Justice. Among other things...

Jacob stands and begins to step backwards towards his window.

JACOB
Other things? M-money? K-kids?

BATMAN (O.S.)
Blood.

JACOB
B—b-blood?

He backs straight into Batman, who grabs his shoulders, holding him still.

BATMAN
Six stories up.

He turns Jacob towards the window.

BATMAN
You would bleed after that fall.

He pushes Jacob back onto the couch. Jacob stairs into Batman’s eyes. He begins to sweat. His fear builds.

Batman smashes the bottle of Jack against the wall.

(continued)
BATMAN
Sharp bottle. You would bleed if I...

JACOB
What the fuck do you want, man!

BATMAN
Maybe I should cut you and then toss you out the window.

JACOB
Is it...is it Zsasz?

BATMAN
Where is he?

JACOB
Fuck man...he’ll fucking do me in.

Batman steps fully out of the shadows. Jacob’s eyes grow large.

JACOB
The fucking BAT!Shit!

BATMAN
I only ask once.

Batman grabs Jacob by the collar and picks him up.

JACOB
Shit. He doesn’t stay anywhere for very long. The guy’s a fucking maniac, man. Look, I can’t tell you where he is. I can tell you where he is going to be.

BATMAN
Explain.

JACOB
Fuck.

BATMAN
Explain!

JACOB
His next target. The next kid.

Batman tightens his grip.

(CONTINUED)
JACOB
The envelope...on the TV.

Batman throws Jacob back into the couch and creeps towards the TV. He lifts an envelope off the TV. Jacob creeps his hands under the couch cushion and pulls out a pistol.

BATMAN
How does this filth end?

JACOB
The fucking kid dies.

Batman turns around. Jacob raises the pistol and fires two shots at Batman’s chest. The bullets ricochet off his armor. Batman grabs the TV and throws it at Jacob, knocking him back against the couch.

Sirens grow nearer.

BATMAN
That’s your ride.

Jacob begins to bleed out of his nose.

JACOB
You just gonna’ wait for him?

BATMAN
I’ll find him.

JACOB
He’s everywhere and nowhere!

BATMAN
I guess we’ll meet in between.

As the front door crashes down and the police run into the apartment, Batman jumps out the window and glides down to the street.

EXT.GOTHAM–NIGHT

The bright moon is offset by dark clouds lurking over the skyline of Gotham. On a distant rooftop standing with his head held high, is a silhouette of Batman. Rain begins to fall over the streets of Gotham, and as gunshots are heard the bat-signal appears over the clouded moon.

CUT TO

(CONTINUED)
A car races through the streets of Gotham. Two police cars trail in close pursuit as the car speeds away. Suddenly at a street corner the car violently turns, braking. The police cars stop in the distance and the officers cautiously exit their vehicles. Officer LUSTIC(23) leans over his car door, shielding him from the unknown.

The pale green door of the criminal vehicle slowly open. The JOKER(?) steps out from the drivers seat. He puts his arms behind his head, and creeps towards the officers.

OFFICER LUSTIC
Who the hell is this?

The Joker begins to laugh hysterically, as he reaches into his sleeve and pulls out a JOKER card.

OFFICER LUSTIC
Freeze! Stop what you are doing and place your hands on your head!

The Joker continues to laugh as he drops the Joker card onto the ground.

THE JOKER
Officer, was I speeding?

He grins, and then clicks a small detonator located in the palm of his left hand. The pale green car explodes violently into the air.

The officers all duck to the ground as the car falls back to the ground. The Joker pulls two Desert Eagle .45s out of his pants, one in each hand. He fires at the officers killing all six of them. As the rain hurries to put out the fire, The Joker creeps over to Lustic.

Lustic’s dead body lies up against the police car door. The red blood pouring out of his nose and mouth offset his pale white face.

THE JOKER
Why so gloom?

The Joker giggles as he places his pistols back into his pants, behind his shirt and vest. He takes a knife out of his pocket, and begins to carve Lustic’s face. He extends Lustic’s lips in the shape of a smile by slicing his cheeks.

THE JOKER
There we go, now your not so down!

He laughs hysterically.
EXT.BAT SIGNAL ROOFTOP-NIGHT

The Bat Signal illuminates the sky. Jim and Batman stand on the rooftop. Jim has a look of disgust on his face.

BATMAN
What is it?

JIM GORDON
I was just at a homicide.

BATMAN
Those happen frequently here.

JIM GORDON
The victim, a cop. His mouth was. It was carved to make it look like he’s smiling.

BATMAN
Zsasz?

JIM GORDON
I don’t think so.

He pulls a Joker card out of his pocket.

JIM GORDON
Found this.

BATMAN
A Joker card?

JIM GORDON
What the hell is going on around here? First we got this Zsasz character, then that little fiasco at Dent’s conference.

BATMAN
Fiasco?

JIM GORDON
Some assholes sprayed graffiti over the new campaign poster.. Just some damn kids.

BATMAN
Just a bunch of JOKERS...

JIM GORDON
Shit. I didn’t even think of that.

(CONTINUED)
BATMAN
I’m used to doing your job.

JIM GORDON
Will you look into this for me?

BATMAN
I almost have Zsasz.

JIM GORDON
You almost have him? Do you have some lead you haven’t told me about?

BATMAN
A man deserves his secrets.

JIM GORDON

BATMAN
Shadows are full of secrets.

Batman turns and steps to the edge, his toes hanging over. He slowly leans forward and then dives off the rooftop. He spreads his arms and glides away.

Jim smiles.

INT. JIM GORDON’S HOUSE—NIGHT

Jim sits in his living room with his wife BARBARA (35).

JIM GORDON
These streets are getting worst everyday.

BARBARA
You knew that when you started.

JIM GORDON
It’s like these bastards don’t even have any hearts.

BARBARA
They don’t.

JIM GORDON
We better hope and pray Dent gets elected. He may be Gotham’s last hope.

(CONTINUED)
BARBARA
What about your friend. "The BATman".

JIM GORDON
He’s a good guy, one of the few. He just doesn’t do what needs to be done.

BARBARA
And what is that?

JIM GORDON
He captures the bastards, puts them in Arkham. Next thing you know, they break out. Its a damn cycle.

BARBARA
Are you saying he should kill them?

JIM GORDON
I’m saying that if he really wants to save Gotham, death is the answer. The only answer.

A brick crashes through the window. Attached to it is a note. Jim picks up the brick and reads the note...

JIM GORDON
"You should learn to LAUGH, signed J."

BARBARA
J?

INT. JOKER’S LAIR—NIGHT
The Joker sits in front of a cracked mirror. The room is filled with darkness. A single window lets in a small amount of moonlight which reflects off the mirror.

THE JOKER
Black is white. Up is down.

He smiles.

THE JOKER
Gotham’s bought to be a FUCKED UP town!

He lets out a howling, sinister laugh.
EXT. GOTHAM—MORNING

A large traffic jam on a busy Gotham road. The cars are stopped bumper to bumper. Taxi cab drivers exit their cars and scream at drivers in the cars in front of them.

Down the street, past the traffic jam, The Joker stands on top of a large purple van. He is holding an AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifle in his hands. As a police helicopter flies overhead, The Joker raises the rifle towards a group of citizens standing in front of his van.

The helicopter hovers overhead. One of The Joker’s GOONS(33) fires an RPG from a distant rooftop. The helicopter takes a direct hit and falls to the ground, smothering a group of vehicles.

The Joker opens fire on the gathered crowd, killing all of them.

The roar of the bat mobile grows louder as it jumps over the traffic jam. It slams to a halting brake on top of numerous corpses in front of The Joker.

The Joker stops firing as Batman exits the bat mobile.

THE JOKER
Why, if it isn’t The Batman?

BATMAN
Who are you?

THE JOKER
We’re not so different, you and I.

BATMAN
Who are YOU?

THE JOKER
We both hide under...masks.

A pale green helicopter hovers overhead and drops a ladder down to The Joker.

THE JOKER
You just need to learn how to smile!

He grabs the ladder and the helicopter flies away. Batman watches in disbelief. Jim Gordon’s car speeds to the scene. He hops out of the car.

(CONTINUED)
JIM GORDON
What the hell happened here?

BATMAN
I was too late.

JAKE FLANERTY (26), a bumbling reporter, sneaks a few photos of Batman standing over the wreckage.

INT. WAYNE MANOR—DAY

Bruce slams the newspaper down onto a coffee table.

BRUCE
"BATMAN: ACCOMPLICE TO MASS SLAUGHTER?" These bastards can’t be serious!

ALFRED
The press always does this sort of thing.

BRUCE
I had NOTHING to do with this!

ALFRED
It will pass.

BRUCE
Who was that...thing? He was like some sort of evil clown.

ALFRED
What is going on here?

BRUCE
Hell has opened up.

ALFRED
I think it’s time you stepped it up a bit.

BRUCE
I can only do so much.

ALFRED
Master Wayne, have you lost something?

BRUCE
What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: 22.

ALFRED
In the beginning, you were so adamant about your crusade for justice. It just seems like you’re ready to give up.

BRUCE
I haven’t given up.

ALFRED
You CAN’T give up.

INT.CHILD’S ROOM-NIGHT-THUNDERSTORM

The door creeps open, letting in silent light. Zsasz begins to creep inside, the knife clenched in his hand reflects some of the light.

He begins to creep slowly towards the bed. As he reaches the bed, a shadow briefly blocks the light in the doorway. Zsasz lowers his free hand down towards the covers, and begins to pull them back.

BATMAN(O.S.)
Do you like to see their faces?

Quickly, Zsasz grabs the GIRL(6) out of the bed and holds the knife to her throat.

VICTOR
Don’t move...I’ll cut her FUCKING throat!

GIRL
MOMMY!

BATMAN
Drop the girl.

VICTOR
I’m not done with her!

He begins to lick her face.

VICTOR
Look at her, man, she fucking LOVES it!

Batman looses control of his emotions and lunges towards Zsasz. Victor tosses the girl towards him, blocking himself. Batman knocks her to the side and continues towards Zsasz. Zsasz lands punches into Batman’s face. He slices a thin scar onto Batman’s chin.

(CONTINUED)
Batman is pushed back into a dresser, breaking it. Zsasz grabs the girl by her hair and holds her head up.

VICTOR
I want you to watch!

The knife is forced into her throat, killing her. Victor drops the dead girl.

VICTOR
The one you couldn’t save!

Batman lunges at him, knocking him out the window. Victor falls through the glass window and crashes down onto the ground. Batman peeks outside, Zsasz is dead.

EXT.CHILD’S HOUSE-NIGHT-THUNDERSTORM
The girl’s parents arrive home.

INT.CHILD’S ROOM-NIGHT-THUNDERSTORM
The MOTHER(45) and FATHER(56) enter the room, screaming. Batman stands over their dead child.

FATHER
What the hell?

MOTHER
What did you do?

BATMAN
I’m sorry.

FATHER
Sorry?

BATMAN
I. Was late.

FATHER
Late?

BATMAN
I’m sorry.

Batman jumps out of the window, and glides down to the ground.
EXT. ROOFTOPS – NIGHT

The bright moon outlines Batman’s silhouette standing tall in the night. He removes his mask.

   BATMAN (V.O)
   I knew that I couldn’t always be there. I never knew it would hurt this bad.

He drops the mask onto the ground.

   BATMAN (V.O)
   Two lives were lost tonight.

He removes the top half of the bat-suit and drops it down next to the mask. A tear rolls down his face.

   BATMAN (V.O)
   The girl.

He turns and walks into the shadows.

   BATMAN (V.O)
   And The Batman.

EXT. ROOFTOPS – MORNING

Time flies, and the sun rises over the Gotham skyline. Jim Gordon creeps over to the bat-suit and mask. He leans down, lifts the mask into his hands and lowers his head.

   JIM GORDON
   Hope is lost.

INT. WAYNE MANOR – MORNING

Bruce Wayne sits on a couch with his head in his hands. Alfred creeps slowly up to him.

   ALFRED
   I thought you may like to see this...

He hands him the front page of the paper.

   BRUCE
   "BATMAN: COLD BLOODED KILLER?"

Bruce shreds the paper and tosses it across the room.

(CONTINUED)
ALFRED
You must contain your anger, Bruce.

BRUCE
Contain my anger?

Bruce stands, infuriated. He flips over the couch.

BRUCE
Fuck this shit!

ALFRED
GOTHAM NEEDS YOU!

BRUCE
Let Gotham ROT!

ALFRED
Have you fallen that low?

BRUCE
I let her die.

ALFRED
It’s not your fault.

BRUCE
I was forced to kill a man.

ALFRED
Some men need to die.

BRUCE
I am no longer anything more than the scum I was so damn eager to destroy!

ALFRED
Have you really lost your faith?

BRUCE
My faith? Faith has nothing to do with this. If God existed, that little girl wouldn’t have been killed.

ALFRED
I used to believe God lived in you.

BRUCE
What do you EXPECT ME TO DO?

(CONTINUED)
ALFRED
RISE! I expect you to RISE above!

Bruce walks past Alfred. Alfred allows a single tear to roll down his cheek.

EXT. BAT SIGNAL ROOFTOP—DAY

The Joker and a few goons stand next to the bat-signal. The Joker holds a baseball bat in his hands.

THE JOKER
Say goodnight to The Batman!

He crashes the bat into the bat signal, destroying it.

EXT. STREET—DAY

Bruce Wayne stumbles, drunkly, down a sidewalk. He grips a bottle of Jack in his right hand. A WOMAN (23) bumps into him.

WOMAN
Hey, you’re Bruce Wayne!

BRUCE
Would you like to fuck?

The woman slaps him. He smiles as she walks away from him. He takes another swig and continues down the sidewalk.

A thief charges out of a store carrying a gun in one hand and a large bag in the other. Women and children run out of the store crying and screaming. Bruce watches motionless as he runs by.

INT. JUDGE PATRICKS HOUSE—MORNING

JUDGE WILLIAM PATRICKS (65) hangs from his ceiling fan with an odd smile stretched out across his face. Taped to his jacket is a note; "HE DIDN’T GET THE JOKE!".

Jim Gordon stands in the room.

JIM GORDON
He was Dent’s main funding.

He pulls a notebook out of his back pocket. As he peers over the corpse he notices a JOKER card lodged in his dead right hand.

(CONTINUED)
JIM GORDON
Guy’s got a sick sense of humor.

He looks around the room for clues. ARE YOU LAUGHING YET? is written in blood across the wall.

JIM GORDON
What are you hiding?

He walks closer to a bookcase, observing the books.

A large RED BOOK has a fairly visible lens sticking about a quarter of an inch out of its spine. He grabs the book, and takes a closer look.

A camera.

JIM GORDON
Smile, you dumb bastard.

INT. GOTHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT—DAY

Jim Gordon stands with JAY(28) watching a recording of Judge Patrick’s house.

In the video: THE JOKER crashes through the front door, knocking it over. He grabs the Judge and strangles him to death.

JAY
What the fuck is that?

JIM GORDON
Some sort of clown. Thinks he’s humorous.

JAY
Sick fuck.

As The Joker peers slowly at the camera.

JIM GORDON
Stop.

Jay clicks a button.

JIM GORDON
Print that, I want a copy out to every precinct this side of the East End.

(CONTINUED)
JAY
You got it.

Jim pulls his cell phone out of his pocket.

JIM GORDON
Yeah, it’s Gordon. I got a picture of our mystery man. I think you better check this guy out yourself.

INT.WAYNE MANOR-NIGHT

A lavish crowd gossips inside Wayne Manor. Bruce, dressed in his nicest suit, shakes a few hands. Alfred stumbles over to him.

ALFRED
What are you doing?

BRUCE
What do you mean?

ALFRED
Who are all these people?

BRUCE
Just some friends, Alfred.

ALFRED
You are drunk!

BRUCE
And your not, drink up!

Bruce hands Alfred a glass of champagne.

ALFRED
When will you wake up?

Bruce takes the glass back, and drinks down the champagne.

A glass shatters, and a woman screams. THE JOKER, dressed in a purple suit, steps slowly towards Bruce and Alfred.

ALFRED
Another of your friends, sir?

BRUCE
I don’t believe we’ve met.

The Joker smiles.
THE JOKER
Mr. Wayne, I don’t mean to drop in so unannounced.

BRUCE
Who are you?

THE JOKER
You can call me Mr. J.

ALFRED
I’m sorry, sir, but this is a private party...

The Joker backhands Alfred, knocking him to the ground. The women scream, and some bolt for the exit. Bruce tends to Alfred.

THE JOKER
Knock knock, Mr. Wayne.

The Joker reaches into his pocket, and pulls out a 44 Magnum.

BRUCE
What the hell do you WANT?

The Joker grabs an innocent WOMAN(25) and holds the barrel to her head.

THE JOKER
Knock knock!

BRUCE
Who’s there?

THE JOKER
The BATMAN!

The Joker lets out a loud and obnoxious laugh, pulling the trigger as he does. The blood from the woman’s head splatters all over the guests whom all sprint towards the exit.

THE JOKER
Come on Bruce, show me your true COLORS!

He points the gun at another fleeing GUEST(45) and pulls the trigger shooting him in the back.
JIM GORDON(OS)
DROP THE GUN!

Jim Gordon walks with his weapon aimed at The Joker. He steps in front of Bruce.

THE JOKER
Oh, Jimmie boy! Here for the fun?

JIM GORDON
I said DROP IT asshole!

THE JOKER
Gentlemen, when all your secrets are exposed, and there’s not much left to be said. You can ask yourselves one last thing.

He begins to step backwards. A smoke canister is thrown in from the outside.

THE JOKER
Are you LAUGHING YET!?

As he laughs, smoke fills the room. Jim begins firing, the bullets hit pictures and the wall.

BRUCE
Who the hell was that?

JIM GORDON
He calls himself THE JOKER.

BRUCE
What does he want with me?

JIM GORDON
Pain, Mr, Wayne. That man wants PAIN.

INT.GOTHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT-DAY

Jim Gordon sits at his desk answering a ringing phone.

JIM GORDON
Yes, I have seen the Batman signal. No I do not know who did it. No, I haven’t spoken to The Batman!

Harvey Dent walks into the office. Jim hangs up his phone.

(CONTINUED)
HARVEY DENT
What the hell is going on out there, Jim?

JIM GORDON
I don’t really know, Harvey.

HARVEY DENT
We need to get this under control, find THE BATMAN, and find him quickly!

INT.HOUSE-NIGHT
STAN(34) and LISA(33) sit on a couch watching THE THREE STOOGES.

STAN
They just don’t do it like this anymore.

The two burst out in laughter. Someone knocks at the door. Stand stands up, laughing and stumbles over to the door. He opens it.

STAN
What can I help ya’ with?

The door is slammed shut, The Joker’s laughter is heard behind the closed door. Lisa stands up.

LISA
Who was that sweetie?

She turns to the door.

Stan’s corpse is lieing dead on the floor with a JOKER card nailed to his head.

EXT.HOUSE-NIGHT
Lisa screams.

EXT.GOTHAM MALL-DAY
Crowds of people enter and exit the mall. A group of children skip through the doors.

Jim Gordon walks with his wife, holding her hand.

(CONTINUED)
JIM GORDON
It’s days like these. I think maybe this town hasn’t gone under.

BARBARA
Thanks to the Gotham Police Department.

JIM GORDON
We do our best, I just don’t think we could do it alone.

BARBARA
You still haven’t heard from your friend?

JIM GORDON
I don’t know what’s gotten into him. With the signal broken I can’t even call him.

BARBARA
There must be some way to reach him.

A store inside the mall explodes sending a huge cloud of smoke rising from the rooftop. Jim grabs his wife. People charge out of the mall, some on fire.

The Joker steps out of the mall, holding two Sub-Machine guns, one in each hand. He turns to a group of children, and opens fire.

Jim reaches into his pocket and pulls out his pistol. He aims, fires, and misses. The Joker turns, laughing. He fires a few shots into Barbara, knocking her to the ground.

JIM GORDON
NO!

Jim fires the remainder of his clip at The Joker, but all bullets miss. The Joker guns down a few more people and then disappears into the smoke.

Jim kneels down by his wife’s side.

JIM GORDON
Hold on! You’ll be FINE I promise!

An ambulance rushes to the scene.
INT.GOTHAM HOSPITAL—DAY

Barbara lies on a hospital bed, hooked up to a few different machines. Jim sits in a chair by her bedside.

JIM GORDON
I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have let this happen. The streets should be safer.

He kisses her cheek. He the stands.

JIM GORDON
Someone has to act. This has to end.

EXT.GOTHAM PARK—DAY

Bruce Wayne sits on a bench, drunk, gripping a bottle of Jack tightly in his right hand. His facial hair has grown out.

A group of school children skip by him as he swigs from the bottle. Luscious Fox wanders up to the bench and sits.

LUSCIOUS
Mr.Wayne, I never thought I’d find you here.

BRUCE
I enjoy the scenery.

LUSCIOUS
It’s a funny thing, youth.

Bruce swigs.

LUSCIOUS
When your young you have the whole world at the tip of your fingers.

BRUCE
The world is overrated.

LUSCIOUS
I suppose you would know. Have you read the paper’s lately, Mr.Wayne?

BRUCE
I can’t say that I have.

Luscious pulls a newspaper out of his coat pocket and lays it on Bruce’s lap.

(CONTINUED)
LUSCIOUS
Don’t lose sight of what you had.

Luscious stands and walks away. Bruce looks down onto the headline; "BATMAN: NO MORE?".

EXT. THE PARK—DAY

Harvey Dent stands in front of a crowd of people, Jim is not present with him. A REPORTER(34) holds a microphone up to his mouth.

REPORTER
How pleased are you with your victory?

HARVEY DENT
A win’s a win! You can be sure that the streets of Gotham will become much safer in the following months.

REPORTER
Do you have any comments on the sudden disappearance of Jim Gordon?

HARVEY DENT
Only that we will not rest until we find him. I want to say something else, Batman, if your out there, please come home.

The Joker scuffles through the crowd.

THE JOKER
Good afternoon, Mr. Dent.

HARVEY DENT
Who are you?

THE JOKER
Why I’m Mr. J!

HARVEY DENT
Your... your the... The JOKER!

As he points to The Joker a group of police officers make a move towards him, but stop as The Joker reveals a bomb strapped around his waist.

THE JOKER
Not so fast, boys.

He laughs.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

HARVEY DENT
What do you want?

THE JOKER
I want what YOU have. Power.

HARVEY DENT
Power?

The Joker squeezes the detonator in his right hand, and a chemical acid blasts out of the bomb on his waist, hitting Harvey in the face.

As Harvey hits the ground, a group of goons jump down from a helicopter, opening fire on all the pedestrians. The reporter is left alive. The Joker grabs the microphone out of her hand, and looks deep into the NEWS CAMERA.

THE JOKER
Hello Gotham! What do you say we liven things up a bit?

He laughs.

EXT.BEACH-DAY

Bruce sits at the edge of the ocean, swigging from a bottle. Alfred walks up behind him.

ALFRED
When you were young, I used to take you out here. You and that dog of yours, BANE.

BRUCE
He was a good dog.

ALFRED
Yes he was, and he loved the water. Do you remember the day he died?

BRUCE
I still see it in my dreams.

ALFRED
Your father told you that there was nothing more to be done, but you demanded he tried something. You never quit on him. So why do you quit on Gotham?
BRUCE
There's a point in every man's mind, Alfred. A line. It's with Murder, Alfred, MURDER.

He swigs.

BRUCE
I guess I was just pushed to far.

ALFRED
Bruce, they have Jim.

Bruce stops drinking, drops the bottle, and looks directly into Alfred's eyes.

BRUCE
What?

ALFRED
The Joker, he's taken Jim.

BRUCE
How do you know it was him?

Alfred reaches into his pocket.

ALFRED
They found this in his wife's hospital room.

He pulls a note out of his pocket and begins to read...

ALFRED
To Bat-Boy. When will you step out beyond your mask and realize, life is full of humor? The carnival's in town, I think you deserve a few laughs. Love, The Joker.

BRUCE
The carnival?

ALFRED
Now you must make a decision.

BRUCE
He knows my identity.

ALFRED
Do you sit back and drink away your pain.

(CONTINUED)
BRUCE
He doesn’t want me to hide, he wants me DEAD.

ALFRED
Or do you act, do you RISE?

EXT. ROOFTOPS—NIGHT

Bruce stands tall above Gotham. The bright lights shine on below him. He listens to cries and police sirens in the distance.

A BUM(62) scurries up behind him.

BUM
Hey pal, you got a cig?

Bruce turns.

BRUCE
Sorry, I don’t smoke.

BUM
That’s good, me neither. I just gotta’ find something to do at night. Got nothing left.

BRUCE
I’m sorry.

BUM
Don’t be sorry, it’s my fault. Your still a young fellow. Make something out of yourself.

Bruce smiles.

BUM
Be somebody, kid. Change the world.

BRUCE
How do I do that?

BUM
Well, that’s a hard one. People listen to other people everyday of their lives. Listen to yourself.

Bruce looks back over the city.
INT. BATCAVE—NIGHT

Bruce steps quickly to a large case. Alfred stands closely behind him. Bruce opens the case, revealing a bat suit.

BRUCE
Alfred, I’m going to face death, again.

ALFRED
Master Bruce, death has become a part of your everyday life.

BRUCE
Why do men do these things? Why do they push?

ALFRED
Some men thrive on pain. Some men want to BE the REAPER.

He pulls the suit out of the case.

BRUCE
And what does that make me?

ALFRED
An angel, Bruce. An angel.

He pulls a mask out of the case, and holds it up.

INT. FUNHOUSE—NIGHT

Jim sits, naked and tied down in the center of a room of mirrors. The Joker appears in all the mirrors.

JIM GORDON
Someone will come for me!

THE JOKER
That’s what I’m hoping for.

JIM GORDON
What are you going to do with me?

THE JOKER
After I kill your friend, Batsy, I’ll take you back to your wife. Then I’ll kill her right in front of you, smiling the entire TIME.

The Joker bursts out in laughter. His laughter echoes throughout the funhouse.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: 39.

JIM GORDON
You son of a bitch!

THE JOKER
You need to liven up a bit!

He steps back into the shadows.

THE JOKER(OS)
Perhaps this will help.

A click is heard.

JIM GORDON
What the hell are you doing? You LUNATIC!

A tape of The Joker laughing loops over and over throughout the room.

EXT. GOTHAM CITY FAIRGROUNDS—NIGHT

The cold wind blows a chill through the now erected state fair. A large ferris wheel stands high above the many tents and dark rides.

The fair doesn’t open for another week, and yet the funhouse lights are shining brightly.

Batman creeps through the front entrance. As he peers around the fair, he notices the bright lights shining from the funhouse.

INT. FUNHOUSE—NIGHT

Batman enters the funhouse. He is greeted by a robotic clown.

He walks through an over-sized clown mouth, into a foggy darkness. A hall of heavy-bags stand between him and the entrance to the hall of mirrors.

Fog fills the room, as he pushes bags out of his way.

CUT TO:

The Joker stands before Jim Gordon.

THE JOKER
The world is a really insane place. The only TRUE way to survive is to succumb to the INSANITY.

(CONTINUED)
JIM GORDON
Let me go!

THE JOKER
See, there were these two guys in a lunatic asylum... and one night... one night they decide they don’t like living in an asylum any more. They decide they’re going to escape! So like they get up on to the roof, and there, just across the narrow gap, they see the rooftops of the town, stretching away in moon light... stretching away to freedom.

The Joker laughs.

THE JOKER
Your gonna’ love how this ends!

Jim stairs into his eyes.

THE JOKER
Now the first guy he jumps right across with no problem. But his friend, his friend daren’t make the leap. Y’see he’s afraid of falling... So then the first guy has an idea. He says “Hey! I have my flash light with me. I will shine it across the gap between the buildings. You can walk across the beam and join me.” But the second guy just shakes his head. He says... he says “What do you think I am, crazy? You would turn it off when I was half way across.”

The Joker bursts out laughing. Jim begins to smirk.

THE JOKER
Even though you stand at the edge of death, you still smile? THAT is because every mind has the potential to break.

He leans in closer to Jim.

THE JOKER
When a man begins to question his sanity, things begin to get a little bumpy!
He grins widely.

BATMAN(O.S)
Let him go!

The Joker turns around.

THE JOKER
I’m so glad you could join us!

The Joker begins to back away from Jim.

JIM GORDON
Grab him! NOW!

The Joker bolts behind a mirror, laughing. Batman runs to Jim, and unties him.

JIM GORDON
Grab him...take him to Arkham.

BATMAN
He doesn’t deserve Arkham.

JIM GORDON
Show him OUR way WORKS!

EXT. GOTHAM CITY FAIRGROUNDS-NIGHT

The Joker flees towards the entrance.

BATMAN(O.S)
STOP!

The Joker turns, facing Batman. He takes his jacket and shirt off, exposing a bomb fastened to his body.

THE JOKER
It’s to late.

BATMAN
It’s NEVER to late!

THE JOKER
It’s FAR to late. Take one more step and you loose both me and your pal Jim.

BATMAN
You mean...
THE JOKER
There’s enough fucking C4 in that funhouse to turn it upside down.

He laughs.

BATMAN
You don’t have to do this! You can get help.

THE JOKER
Help is a luxury. One that I just can’t afford!

The Joker clicks a small detonator in his hand, which causes flags entitled;BOOM! to pop out of the bomb around his waist. As he laughs the funhouse explodes. Batman turns watching the flames.

As he turns back, The Joker has disappeared into the darkness.

Batman runs to the flames, searching for Jim.

BATMAN
JIM?

Jim lies under a large piece of wood debris. His face black with ash.

Batman lifts the wood off of him. He lifts Jim up over his shoulders, and begins to walk away from the flames.

EXT. BAT SIGNAL ROOFTOP—NIGHT

THREE WEEKS LATER

Jim stands next to the newly fixed bat signal. Batman steps out of the shadows.

BATMAN
How are you feeling?

JIM GORDON
I’m alive, thanks to you.

BATMAN
And Barbara?

JIM GORDON
She’s having a few problems. Says she’s afraid of the dark. Probably just trauma.

(CONTINUED)
BATMAN
I see you fixed the signal.

JIM GORDON
We’re going to need it. Dent’s missing from his hospital bed, and something tells me that clown may have something to do with it.

Jim rubs his brow.

JIM GORDON
I wonder how much more I can take. This place is nothing less than hell on earth. Sometimes I feel I should just give up.

BATMAN
I tried that.

Batman turns.

BATMAN
I found myself right where I started.

JIM GORDON
Where’s that?

Batman steps into the shadows.

BATMAN(O.S)
Fear.

Jim smiles.

JIM GORDON
You got a way with words.

He begins to chuckle.

FADE TO BLACK

END CREDITS

THE END